



No More: Our Strategy to end Domestic Abuse and Violence against Women and Girls.

Foreword

In every corner of our communities, the shadow of domestic abuse and Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) looms large, affecting individuals, families, and the very fabric of our society, it is prolific and wide reaching. In 2024, it was estimated that over 2.1 million people aged 16 and over in England and Wales experienced domestic abuse. ⁽¹⁾

The impact of domestic abuse can result in a range of negative and harmful effects on health, wellbeing and outcomes in life. It impacts upon future generations and their ability, capacity and attitude towards relationships, parenting, self-esteem and mental health. Abuse knows no boundaries; it transcends age, gender, race, class, and geography and is often linked to other life experiences which may include financial exclusion, mental health, substance dependencies or homelessness. While awareness has grown in recent years, we must confront the stark reality that countless individuals continue to suffer in silence, trapped in cycles of fear and control. ⁽²⁾

Violence against women and girls (VAWG) has reached epidemic levels with a 37% increase in recorded VAWG related crimes in 2023, indicating at least 1 in every 12 women will be a victim of VAWG every year and 1 in 20 adults in England and Wales will be a perpetrator of VAWG every year.

In 2024, the Home Office classified violence against women and girls (VAWG) as a national threat to public safety. The National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) adopted a counter-terrorism approach to tackle VAWG with government support emphasising the necessity for a whole-system response. Many women and girls fear for their safety in both public and private spaces, highlighting the importance of raising awareness to create a society where everyone feels safe and respected. ⁽³⁾

Sunderland Domestic Abuse and VAWG Executive Board (the Partnership) is proud to be prioritising and building on the relationships of our domestic abuse and VAWG multi agency partnership. This partnership strategy represents a decisive commitment to combating domestic abuse and VAWG.

It is not merely a document, it is a **CALL TO ACTION**, a promise to those affected, and a blueprint for change.

Through our strategy, the Partnership seeks to establish a robust framework that prioritises prevention, supports victim/survivors, and holds perpetrators to account through a coordinated whole systems response. We are committed to fostering an inclusive society where everyone feels valued and safe, and where the cycle of abuse is challenged and dismantled. By engaging with stakeholders, amplifying the voices of survivors, and leveraging community resources, we aim to create sustainable change that not only addresses the immediate needs of those affected but also tackles the root causes of domestic abuse and VAWG.

We would like to take this opportunity to say thank you to those who have provided examples of lived experience of abuse and engaged with our research workshops in Sunderland. Thank you to those who advocated for the voice of young people and children, and to those who have given their ideas for development of services. Thank you also, to those professionals who have given their time to feed into the development of the strategy. Without your valuable insight this partnership strategy could not be formed.

¹ Office for National Statistics (ONS), released 24 November 2023, ONS website, statistical bulletin. [Domestic abuse in England and Wales overview: November 2023](#)

² Women's Aid - Understanding Domestic Abuse and Its Impact. [The impact of domestic abuse: 2023](#)

³ College of Policing, Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) National Policing Statement 2024. [Call to action as VAWG epidemic deepens \(npcc.police.uk\)](#)

Introduction

*This is a document produced
by the Domestic Abuse and VAWG
Executive Board (the Partnership)*

Through this strategy, the Partnership identifies joint commitments for those impacted by Domestic Abuse and VAWG, which include those who have suffered abuse, those who perpetrate violence and abuse, and children and young people impacted by domestic abuse.

This approach identifies areas of priority across the Partnership's collective service provision based on the voices of those with lived experience.

The document sets out the actions to preventing and responding to these pervasive societal challenges, recognising that they affect individuals, families, and communities across all demographics. We know the journey of those impacted by abuse is not linear and can often be complex to navigate, including identifying abuse, immediate need and recovery.

We aim to challenge the stigma linked to discussing and recognising abuse, encouraging conversation and education whilst continuing to reinforce community and partnership cohesion in designing survivor led systems.

This will ensure our partnership strategy encompasses early intervention, prevention, disclosure support, immediate needs support, longer term recovery, the development of perpetrator programmes, and support to children and young people in the right way, at the right time.

Additionally, this document supports Sunderland City Council's statutory requirement to have a local delivery partnership strategy that sets out our aims and priorities in supplying safe supported accommodation provision for adults and children who have experienced domestic abuse.

We all have a role to play in creating a safer, more equitable society.

Mission / Purpose:

“To Eradicate
Domestic Abuse
& Gender-Based
Violence”



Why a Mission-Led Approach to Domestic Abuse and Violence against Women and Girls?

‘Mission-led approaches’ and ‘mission-orientated innovation’, describe long-term, adaptable ways of driving forward change through a relentless focus on the outcome we want to achieve.

We want to use our mission to incite innovation, opportunity and new ways of working to end domestic abuse and gender-based violence, taking a long-term view of strategy that invites engagement across a range of sectors and partners in ending abuse in Sunderland.

What is a mission-led approach?

Mission-led approaches are a way of overcoming complex societal challenges through the establishment of:

- a clear and compelling purpose,
- solution-focused action,
- conditions for ‘actors’ (those who have a role to play in defining and acting on the problem and potential solutions) to come together in new ways to enable transformative change.

By describing our mission as the eradication of domestic abuse and VAWG in Sunderland, we also aim to bring partners, resources, residents, and (crucially) those with lived experience of abuse together in new ways, and we aim to do this in a way that fully aligns to a long-term pursuit of ending domestic abuse and VAWG in our city.

Why it's important

The Domestic Abuse and VAWG Executive Board (the Partnership) understand domestic abuse is hugely under-reported on a national basis and therefore data available does not accurately reflect the true scale of the issue.

The research and statistics presented in the Sunderland Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) ⁽⁴⁾, along with data from Northumbria Police, North East North Cumbria (NENC) women's health needs assessment ⁽⁵⁾ and our commissioned support services help shape this partnership strategy.

Northumbria Police recorded a 6.3% increase in domestic abuse incidents for 2023/24, amounting to an additional 2,506 incidents force wide. All local authority areas within the Northumbria region reported increases during this period.

Sunderland experienced an increase of 9.3% domestic abuse incidents when comparing previous years.

↑ **9.3%**

Increase in Domestic Abuse Incidents in Sunderland 23/24

At the same time, we are observing shifts in the nature of abuse, highlighting its complexity and the influence of broader factors such as deprivation, digital innovation, and social influences. These elements shape the manifestation of domestic abuse and gender-based violence in our city.

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 clarifies the different relationships within which domestic abuse can occur. It emphasises that children who see or hear domestic abuse are victims of abuse. It also confirmed any abusive behaviour that occurs between two people (16 or over) who are 'personally connected' to each other should now be responded to as domestic abuse. This includes not only those who are or have been in an intimate relationship, or shared a parental relationship, but any relative.

⁴ sunderland.gov.uk/jsna

⁵ [NENC Womens Health Needs Assessment](#)

Local Data

Domestic abuse incidents recorded by Northumbria Police show a notable rise in Sunderland, reflecting the broader trend across the Northumbria region.

	2022/23	2023/24	Change
Domestic Abuse Incidents in the Period	8,178	8,940	9.3%
Incidents with Children Involved	3,372	3,834	13.7%
MARAC (cases discussed)*	499	541	8.4%
High Risk Victims	436	473	8.5%
Number of Repeat Victims	1,916	2,100	9.6%

* Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference meetings share information on high-risk domestic abuse cases. In 2023/24, 28% were repeat cases.

In Sunderland, domestic abuse is a common factor in housing presentations. In 2022/23, 275 cases **(12%)** cited domestic abuse as the reason for losing a settled home, making it the fourth most common support need among homeless applications. ⁽⁶⁾

In 2023/24, 238 homeless applications were due to domestic abuse, with 542 more applicants **(23.12%)** indicating they were at risk or had experienced domestic abuse as a primary or secondary support need. This also highlighted an average of 2.99 support needs per presentation, indicating an increase in multiple and complex needs.

⁶ Sunderland Sufficiency Review – Safe Supported Accommodation 2024
[Sufficiency review of SSAP in Sunderland FINAL.pdf 4](#)

What are we going to do about it?

We are setting a long-term mission to end domestic abuse and VAWG. We will translate that mission into reality through our survivor-led 'making it real' approach.

'Making it real' means inciting ideas, innovation and action by asking those with lived experience of abuse what 'excellent' looks like from the eyes of those who are expert by experience.

These are written in the form of 'I statements', which become mini-missions or challenges for system-oriented action that take the form of 'we statements' – the foundations of our mission-led action plan.

Our survivor led 'I statements' that underpin our mission are:

" I feel like I have a purpose and a bright future. "

" I feel like I have a voice and that I can influence decisions made locally to eradicate abuse. "

" I feel and trust that the system is able to identify and intervene when domestic abuse is suspected and/or disclosed. "

" I feel listened to, empowered and able to make informed choices based on my needs. "

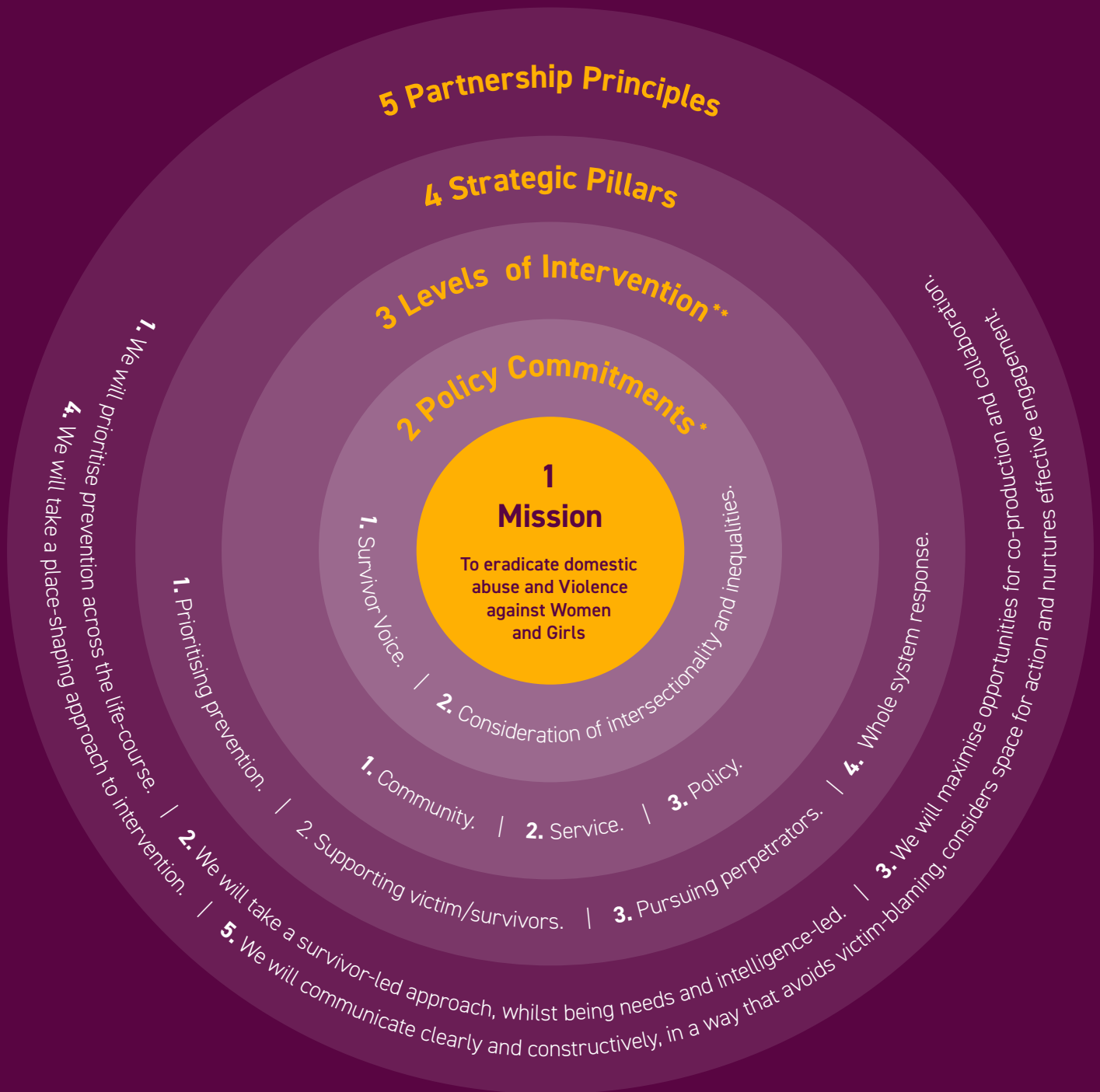
" I feel emotionally, physically and psychologically safe. "

" I feel like my children are supported in a consistent and empathetic way. "

" I feel confident that my children will not go on to abuse or be abused. "

To ensure our mission is focused on the right things and is supported by the behaviours, principles and approaches that will deliver real change, we have created a strategic framework to support the translation of 'I' into 'We'.

This is our 1-2-3-4-5 framework.



*These will guide decisions, governance and assurance.

**This is about delivering a population-level impact – it's based on this >

[Population Intervention Triangle toolkit](#) | [Local Government Association](#)

What will look different as a result?

To assure us that our strategy is working to support the eradication of domestic abuse and gender-based violence, we have identified a dashboard of indicators that help us in assessing the effectiveness of our actions.

These are:

- Percentage of our safer accommodation provision that meets quality standards, as assessed in collaboration with those with lived experience of abuse
- Percentage of individuals who are able to access refuge
- Percentage of woman and girls who report feeling safe in Sunderland
- Percentage of individuals who have been supported to successfully move on from refuge within 56 days
- Percentage reduction in repeat victims of domestic abuse
- Domestic abuse perpetrators reporting positive changes in use of abusive behaviours.
- Percentage of domestic abuse spend on the prioritisation of prevention

How to get involved

Through our [Smart Strategy portal](#), you can access a wide range of regularly updated information and intelligence on domestic abuse and VAWG in our city.

You can also keep updated on action being taken locally to support our mission, including what we've learned and how we've adapted our approach to drive forward change.

There are also links to training and development opportunities to help you join our mission to end domestic abuse and Violence against Women and Girls in Sunderland.



Strategy of the Sunderland Domestic Abuse & VAWG Executive Board 2025-2035

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THE PARTNERSHIP

